



A Change Of Scenery

There are several ways to experience God along with His presence in your life. One of the best ways for me is to slip on my backpack and hit the hiking trail. How about you?

November 2011

It was only a few days ago that I was surrounded by varied forest scenes and the smell of oak and birch wood burning in a fire under a blanket of stars so vivid and numerous that words seem inadequate to describe the shimmering canvas God had painted for me.

That place was the Superior Hiking Trail (SHT) on Minnesota's North Shore of Lake Superior.

There are countless places around the world to experience God and enjoy His creation, but few places offer as much beauty, variety, and panoramic views as the SHT. The 277-mile footpath, along the rocky ridgeline above Lake Superior extends from Duluth to the Canadian border. It is a beautiful example of the scope and scale of God's handiwork and I am awed by it. You can see God's artistic flair and it is easy for people to experience His power and presence in that place.

It also reminds me of how He will always be bigger than any problem, challenge, or conflict I deal with "down here." That helps me keep things in perspective, no matter what I am facing or going through.

Now, just days removed from that marvelous setting, I find myself sitting in my 9 x 9 grey windowless office here in Minneapolis, wondering where all the scenery went? It is here that I am surrounded by convenient amenities of heat, electricity, and comfortable furniture, but my heart is still "up north" along that real, rugged hiking trail.

I don't know about you, but sometimes I struggle a bit to sense or experience God's presence in my life when I get back home. Why? In part, it is because my sense of security and comfort work as a *dis-incentive* toward seeking God.

Distractions

Who needs God in the midst of such amenities, right?

But therein lies the trap.

It is *because* we are so comfortable that we need to shake things up a bit! We need to step outside of our comfort zone...so God can step in. For me, that means venturing back onto the hiking trail where I have no more distractions or noise to use as excuses for not hearing from God.

Don't get me wrong. Our amenities are not bad; in fact, things like computers, TVs, and reclining La-Z-Boys are blessings from the Lord :) We simply need to relate to them properly because these blessings will turn into a curse if or when we elevate them above God. In other words, when we seek the provision more than the *Provider*, we are in trouble.

You say, "I am rich. I have everything I want. I don't need a thing!" And you don't realize that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.

(Rev. 3:15-17 NLT)

Being Still

There is just something about the woods. It's a place of tranquility and wonder, yet void of all the comforts of home. It's just you, the rugged trail...and the Lord. It's interesting to note that even when Jesus wanted to pray, He often did it away from the village; He went to a place of natural peace and quiet.

But Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness for prayer.

(Luke 5:16 NLT)

These trips are intended to be for the kids—to teach them the basics of nature, backpacking, hiking, cooking, and self-reliance—but somewhere along the line God started to use these hiking trips as a way to commune and converse with me in a way that just doesn't happen at home. So what started as a chaperone has grown into a semi-annual outing that I look forward to more and more each year because of its many physical and spiritual benefits.

At times I am unable to pull my eyes away from that vision of a nightline of stars so brilliant that you swear you are looking at a 3D animated version of the real thing.

All because of a hiking trail. Who knew? The Lord really does work in mysterious ways.

Where Is Your Secret Place?

When is the last time you heard from God? Where is your favorite location to get into His presence? Whether you are drawn to a place in the air, on the water, or on land, don't let your busy life or comfortable surroundings keep you from stepping out and seeking Him.

Seek the LORD while you can find him. Call on him now while he is near.

(Isaiah 55:6 NLT)

I love all who love me. Those who search will surely find me.
(Prov. 8:17 NLT)

Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar doth inhabit: let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains.
(Isaiah 42:11 KJV)

Don't worry; it doesn't always require a 50-pound backpack or a 13-mile hike to the summit of a mountain to find God. It simply requires a resolute decision and concerted effort on your part to set aside the attractions and distractions of this life...and focus on Him. I guarantee that God will show up if you do. In fact, He is already there...patiently waiting like a true gentleman.

So...I encourage you to step out of your comfort zone, venture to one of your favorite places, and enjoy the presence of the Lord!

Thank You

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Until next month, I trust that you will make an effort to break out of your routine and set aside some time to seek the Lord. After all, a change of scenery from time to time is good for the head, heart, and soul!

I pray for joy and peace on your daily journey to pursue Him,



Jeffrey Litfin
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